

Ohio State Athletic Director Gene Smith Went “All In” For Football Team Ahead Of Impending Retirement



Ohio State has had one of college football’s biggest offseasons, retooling the roster with several high-profile transfer additions and returning a significant chunk of last year’s team that could have departed for the NFL.

With many of those moves requiring additional resources from Ohio State’s name, image and likeness efforts, the Buckeyes have outgoing athletic director Gene Smith to thank, as he said on Thursday – following a one-hour discussion about his career at the Fawcett Center – that he made the active decision to go all in for this year’s football team.

“I probably put a significant burden on Ross (Bjork) with the budget because I was playing poker with football; I went all in,” he said. “Where we are in football, not winning Big Ten championships, I wanted to make sure we did everything we could to make sure football has a real chance next year.”

Ohio State has not competed in a national championship game or won the Big Ten since 2020, and it has to go back to 2019 to find the last win over rival Michigan, with the Wolverines having taken each of the last three contests between the conference foes.

But the Buckeyes are looking to change those tides this season. In addition to transfer portal pickups such as running back Quinshon Judkins, quarterback Will Howard and safety Caleb Downs, Ohio State is returning double-digit starters from last year’s team, including the likes of defensive ends Jack Sawyer and JT Tuimoloau, cornerback Denzel Burke and wide receiver Emeka Egbuka.

Smith will only be on the job until June 31, at which point Bjork will take over, but he still wanted to look ahead to the upcoming football season and make sure the team was in position to compete, and returning to winning titles as well as games over Michigan.

“When I think about my legacy, so to speak, I think about that,” he said. “I hate to leave Ohio State when football’s not back to winning Big Ten championships. I put a financial burden on Ross and he’s got to balance the budget in the future, because I just went berserk.”